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Amherst's Land Use & Zoning Current Conditions

How We Use the Land

Land Use Distribution

- Total Area—21,986 acres
- Total Developed Area—13,346 acres (62%)
- Residential—10,430 (87% of developed area)
 - ◊ Single-family—10,112 acres
 - ◊ Other Residential—318 acres
- Commercial & Industrial—711 acres (6% of developed area)
- Public & Institutional—251 acres (2% of developed area)
- Recreation—644 acres (5% of developed area)
- Roads—1,312 acres (10% of developed area)
- Protected Open Space—2,966 acres—14% of total area)
- Vacant & Agriculture—5,372 acres (25% of total area)

Residential Parcel Sizes

- Less than 1 acre—1,321 parcels, 803 acres
- 1 to 2 acres—1,189 parcels, 1,730 acres
- 2 to 2.5 acres—337 parcels, 749 acres
- 2.5 to 5 acres—546 parcels, 1,904 acres
- 5 to 10 acres—307 parcels, 2,015 acres
- More than 10 acres—146 acres, 2,910 acres

Land Use Regulations

- 93% of Amherst is zoned for low-density residential. About $\frac{2}{3}$ of this area allows lots of 2 acres or more, and about $\frac{1}{4}$ requires lot sizes of at least 5 acres.
- Commercial/industrial—7% primarily along Route 101A
- Overlay districts to protect historic and natural resources—Historic, Aquifer Conservation, Floodplain, and Watershed Protection Districts
- Several regulations designed to minimize the impact of development—Planned Residential Development, Mixed-use Development, subdivision and site plan controls

See draft section of Amherst's 2008 Master Plan Phase 1 report for additional details and sources.

What Does It Mean?

- More than 60 percent of the town's land is already developed to some extent, and 14 percent is permanently protected. Thus, 25% of the town is available for new development or further conservation.
- Although the smallest lot area permitted in Amherst is 2 acres, 25% of the single-family residences in town are on lots with less than this minimum area.
- Only 75 agricultural and vacant parcels in Amherst are 20 acres or more in area, but these parcels represent almost 70 percent of the unprotected open space in the town (3,704 acres).
- Parcels with at least twice the largest required lot area constitute nearly 30% of the land used for single-family residences, representing another 2,900 acres that could potentially support further residential growth through subdivision.



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Amherst's Land Use & Zoning What We Want

Voice of Amherst¹

"Amherst's rural land seems to be disappearing and residential subdivisions seem to be appearing everywhere. Development is not controlled. Amherst is not a rural town anymore—it is becoming a suburb."

"The development of big-box stores and strip malls along Route 101A has detracted from Amherst's historic and rural character."

"Preserve the existing residential nature of Amherst characterized by the village, rural landscape, New England colonial architecture and small town feel."

"Develop clean and aesthetically pleasing commercial/office activities."

"Adopt stricter commercial design standards."

Goals to Light the Future²

- **Ensure that development and redevelopment respect Amherst's natural resources and complement the Town's character.**
- **Manage development in order to preserve open space and protect natural resources.**
- **Manage development and redevelopment along highway corridors to minimize traffic and environmental impacts, and to enhance the Town's visual character and the quality of life of its residents.**
- **Ensure that the design of commercial areas complements Amherst's historic**

and semi-rural character.

- **Enhance the visual quality of major gateways and corridors in order to enhance the appearance of the community.**
- **Foster sustainability in design and development.**



¹ Resident input, based on various visioning exercises.

² Developed based on Steering Committee and resident input..

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Amherst's Land Use & Zoning What We Can Do ¹

To Ensure That Development Respects Natural Resources & Complements the Town's Character

1. Develop a comprehensive inventory of

To Preserve Open Space & Protect Natural Resources

1. Encourage clustering of residential development.

To Minimize the Impact of Commercial Corridor Development

1. Implement impact fees to support needed capital facilities and infrastructure.

To Promote a High Quality of Commercial Design That Complements the Town's Character

1. Adopt design guidelines for site plan review of commercial development.

To Promote Sustainable Design and Development

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¹ Potential objectives and strategies for discussion.

